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POLITICAL CONCEPTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS.

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A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK IS DESCRIBED FOR DEVELOPING A UNIVERSITY COURSE WHICH COMBINES POLITICAL SCIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION. IT PROPOSES THAT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM, AS ALL SOCIAL SYSTEMS, HAS MEANS OF MAKING AUTHORITATIVE DECISIONS GOVERNING THE BEHAVIOR OF SYSTEM MEMBERS. DAVID EASTON'S INPUT-OUTPUT MODEL IS CITED AS USEFUL IN STUDYING THE POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF VARIOUS SUBSYSTEMS IN THE GREATER SOCIAL SYSTEM. WITHIN THIS MODEL, THE SCHOOL SYSTEM CAN BE VIEWED AS A SYSTEM LOCATED WITHIN A PARTICULAR TWO-DIMENSIONAL ENVIRONMENT--(1) THE INTRASOCIETAL ENVIRONMENT (THE ENVIRONMENT FOR WHICH POLITICAL DECISIONS ARE MADE), AND (2) THE EXTRASOCIETAL ENVIRONMENT (THE GREATER SOCIETY). IN THESE TERMS, THE SCHOOL SYSTEM ENGAGES IN A NUMBER OF EXCHANGES WITH ITS ENVIRONMENT WHICH INCLUDE INPUTS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND OUTPUTS FROM THE SYSTEM. WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY DEVELOPED A COURSE WHICH PERMITTED FOCUS UPON BEHAVIOR, PROCESSES, STRATEGIES, AND INTERACTION. THIS ALLOWED INVESTIGATION INTO THREE NEW PERSPECTIVES IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM--(1) THE SYSTEMS VIEW OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT, (2) THE NATURE OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR, AND (3) THE DYNAMICS OF INSTITUTIONAL ROLES IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. COURSE OBJECTIVES RECOGNIZE THAT EDUCATORS HAVE A DUTY TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY FOR FULFILLING EDUCATIONALLY PRODUCTIVE ENDS AND TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN THE DETERMINATION OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND THE RESOLUTION OF ISSUES RELATED TO EDUCATION. THIS PAPER WAS DELIVERED TO A CONFERENCE ON DESIGNS FOR INCORPORATING CONCEPTS FROM SOCIAL SCIENCES INTO PREPARATORY PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS, SPONSORED BY THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION (COLUMBUS, OHIO, MARCH 12-14, 1967). (GB)

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Political Concepts and the Development of Educational Administrators

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The purpose of this paper is to describe the conceptual framework upon which was developed a course combining political science and educational administration and to show how that course was related to the framework. Those concepts, once incorporated into one's thinking, afford not only a new orientation to politics but to education as an institution and to administration as a function.

All social systems have means of making authoritative decisions governing the behavior of their members. These decisions are authoritative to the degree that they are accepted as binding by the members. For example, small groups allocate such resources as time, votes (whether formally taken or not), status, etc. Permanent groups have been shown to develop rather stable mechanisms for making such allocations.[1] Larger institutions, such as school systems, have institutionalized certain forms of decision-making and authority for making allocative decisions. These forms most generally are bureaucratic hierarchies of responsibility and authority which are maintained by sanctions, expertise, and the folklore of the organization. Other valuables, such as personal prestige and belongingness, not so responsive to formal organizational power are made by stable, persistent, and powerful informal networks within the organization.[2] Larger social systems, such as states and nations, develop both formal and informal modes of decision-making, and vest final authority in defined and protected positions and offices.

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These different types of social systems, and their authority and decision systems, have many common elements and characteristics, and generalizations about all may be drawn from the close observation of any. They have, of course, the common element of persons bound together by some degree of common purpose, each contributing to the group in ways that are interdependent and to some degree necessary to the overall character of the system at a given time. All systems arrive at authoritative decisions through interactions, sometimes among collectives, but always involving individuals and always involving the ultimate exercise of authority which is ultimately granted from the members of the system.

If we define the process of making authoritative decisions for the distribution of values[3] within a social system as policy-making (or politics), it follows that the set of interactions for making these authoritative decisions comprise a political system, and we may then say that every social system engages in political behavior and that every system has a subsystem designed to make political decisions.

The political subsystem, by virtue of being a part of a larger system and performing a specific function necessary to life within the total system, is in constant interaction with other subsystems, each of which tries to maximize its own position vis-a-vis the distribution of values within the larger whole. Thus, we can view the political system as a conceptually identifiable entity inextricably bound to its environment in such a way that its processes are responsive to environmental pressures. In turn, since other subsystems in the environment are dependent upon the political system for performing certain functions, the environment is responsive to what takes place within the political system; thus, the political system and the environment interact in ways that are mutually influencing.

Although we may recognize that these interactions tend to be persistent it is clear that no part of the entire system is endowed with irrevocable permanence. That is simply to say that it is not a closed system, and the interactions are governed by rules that respond and adapt to forces which change and which can be changed by any member of the system or even by pressures from without the total social system. Ideally, any member of the system may influence actions within the political system; however, there are defined networks through which one must work to do so.

Since the system is not closed and the distribution of resources is not fixed, the system is dynamic. To a greater or lesser degree, the system changes and may be changed through the initiation of interactions from either within or without the political system. Although one of the values that the system wishes to utilize and strengthen is its own authority, even that may be considered open to determinations from other sources.

Easton's model is a useful way of viewing these relationships.[4] His concepts are useful for studying political activity at any of the levels of social systems. The model is also useful as a set of spectacles through which one may view the political world and ones own part in that world. It helps explain what otherwise may seem to be bewildering behavior, either within a small group, such as a faculty committee, or at levels of higher and more formal authority, such as the U. S. Congress.

Easton's model and the concepts it incorporates clarify the relationships described above and places them in the framework of a flow system involving inputs, outputs and feedback. It focuses upon the interactions within the political system and purports to explain behavior on the part of formal allocative authorities. Nevertheless, it requires little imagination to extrapolate the model to other social systems and their authoritative subsystems.

Easton's Model

Easton defines the political system as a set of interactions designed for making authoritative decisions in a social system.

Figure 1, shows the political system as a bounded system situated within an environment. The environment has two dimensions: (1) the intra-societal environment which is the one for which the political system makes authoritative decisions, and (2) the extra-societal environment of which (1) is a part. We can see that the intra-societal environment contains an economic system, biological systems, personality systems, and a social system, each of which may be analyzed in relationship to the total society. The extra-societal environment similarly has political systems, economic systems, and social systems which, in this chart, are shown as internatinal because Easton set out to depict the federal political system of the United States.

It requires very little imagination to see that we could use the same conceptual scheme, change a few of the terms, and call the principal's office a political system existing in an environment made up of the school and its various sub-systems for which the principal's office makes authoritative decisions and an extra-societal environment made up of other members of the school system, the community, the nation, etc.

The figure also has double-headed arrows showing that the political system engages in a number of exchanges with its environment. The significant interactions which may be used to analyze the political system and its exchanges with the environment are shown in Figure 2. Exchanges include inputs which are defined in terms of demands and support originating from the environment and fed into the political system. Some inputs cause stress within the system. In turn the political system initiates various outputs which are directed into the

Fig. 1. David Easton's Schematic Shows The Political System in Its Total Environment

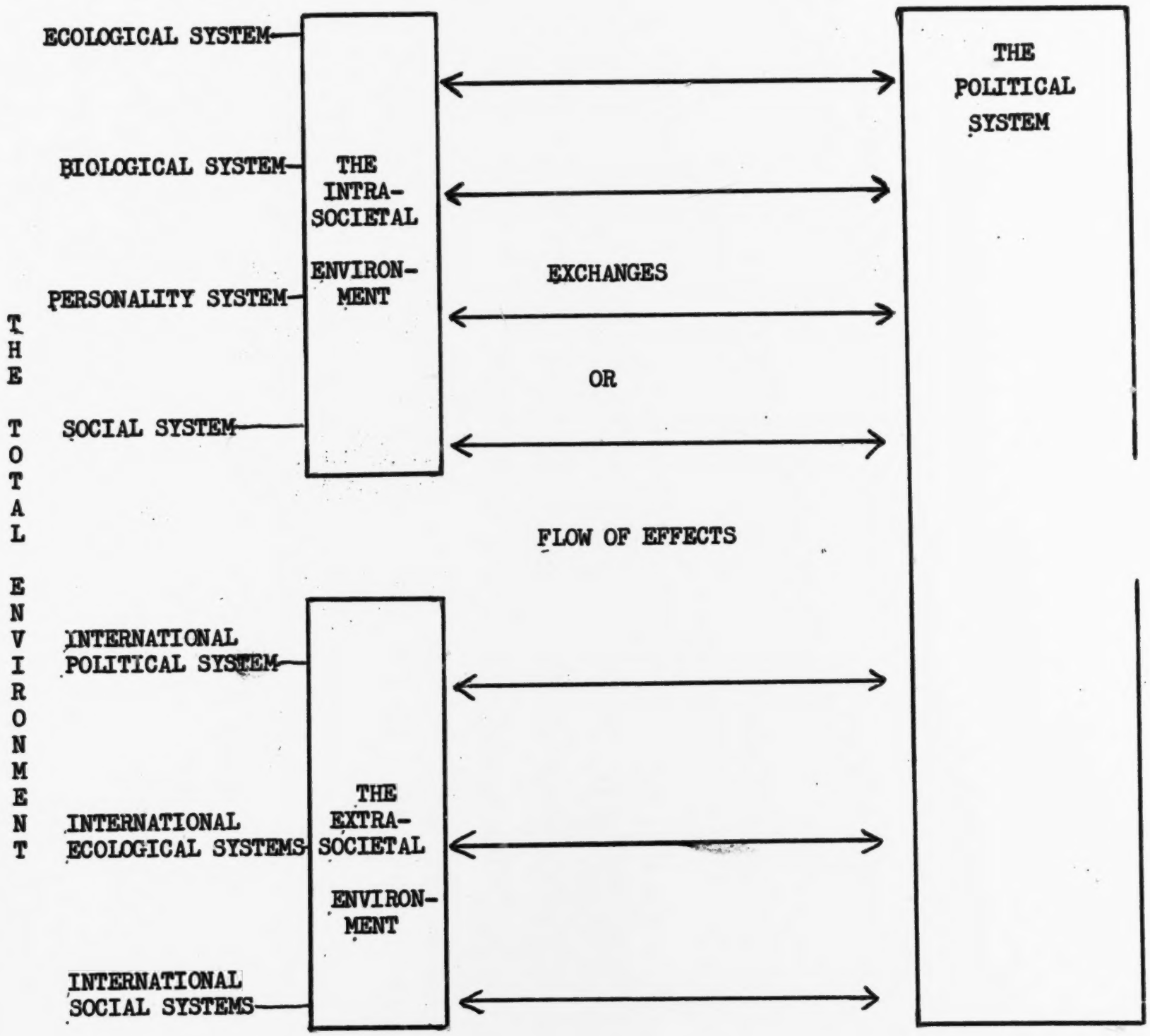


Fig. 2. Exchanges Take the Form of Inputs and Outputs

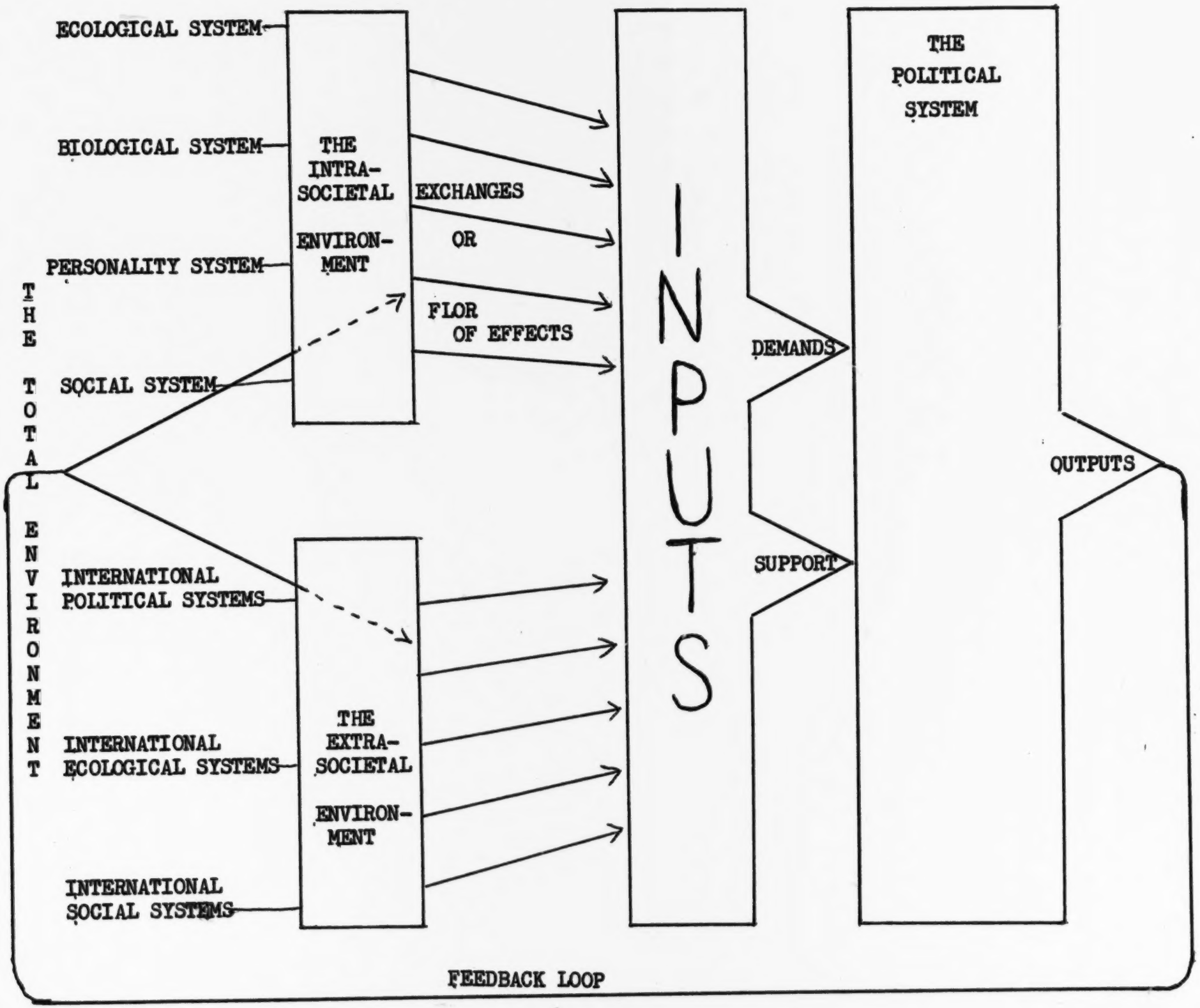
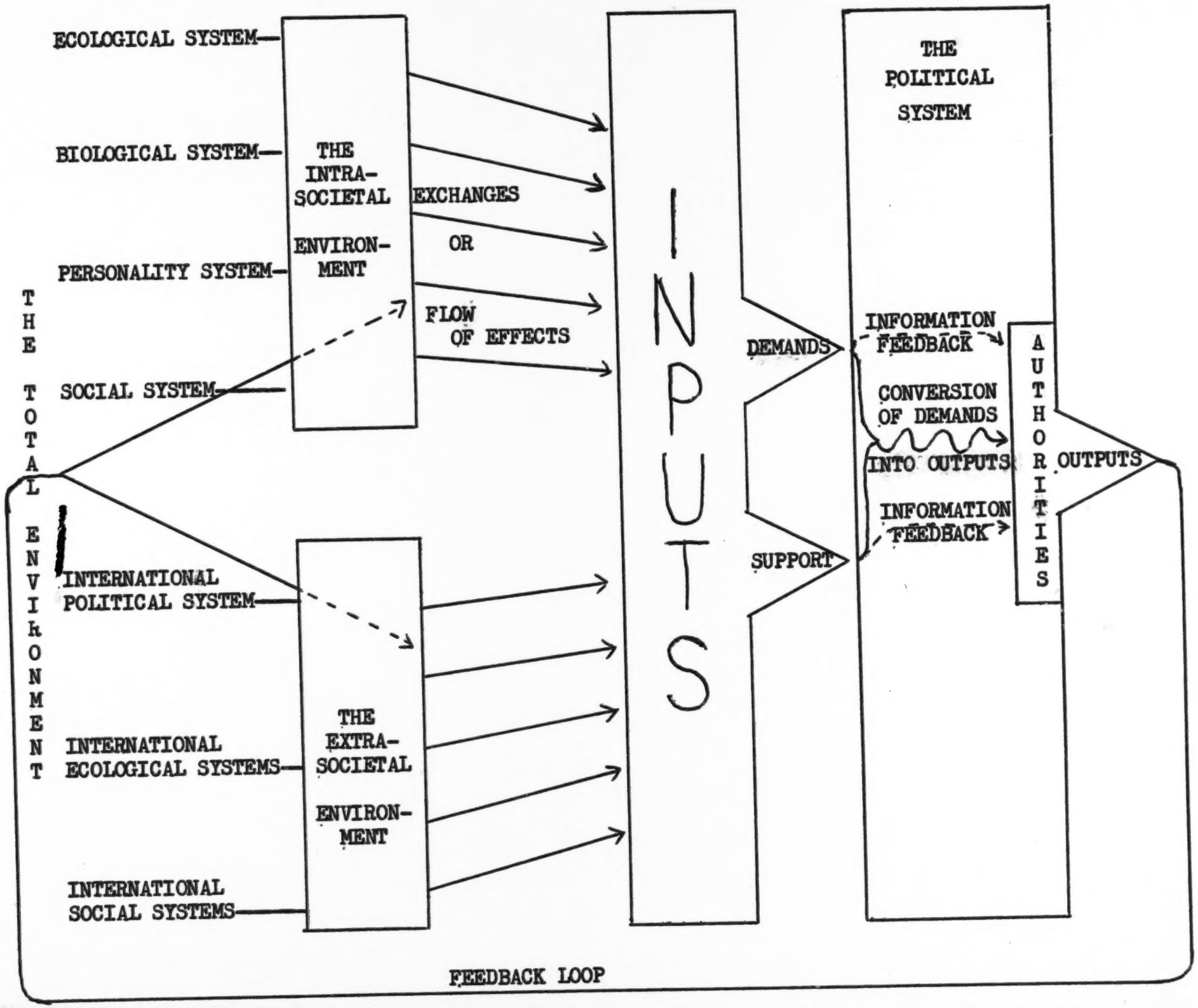


Fig. 3. Demands from the Environment Are Converted Within the Political System into Outputs Which Feed Back into the Environment to Influence Inputs



environment in a manner which resembles a feedback loop. These outputs may be conceived of as attempts to reduce stress (i.e., to increase support and minimize demands) in a variety of ways not all of which are direct responses to a particular demand. For example, if the President (or school principal) can alleviate demands by issuing a statement and going no further, the statement may be seen as a output which is successful if indeed it curtails the demand made upon the system.

Of still more interest to those who study the political system and its processes is figure 3 which attempts to conceptualize what takes place within the political system. We can see that a small portion of the political system is made up of authorities whose final word is necessary before a decision will be authoritative. Authorities are those who possess the necessary legal right and responsibility to place a stamp of authoritativeness upon an output. Once demands and support inputs enter the political system, information about them is disseminated through the system. The information feedback process influences the degree of stress aroused in the system and affects what responses it will make. For example, the information feedback system may provide authorities with accurate information on the relative weight of demands and supports and cause authorities to make politically sound outputs. However, the information feedback may not be accurate and will result in some poor decisions. The wavy arrow shows that there are many ways to convert demands into outputs and there is seldom a straight line between a demand source and an authoritative response. Much of what political scientists study as policy formation is contained in the set of interactions depicted in this figure.

Basic Concepts and Objectives of the Course

It is within the framework of the concepts and relationships presented above that we developed a course at Syracuse University, denoted as "The Politics of Education at State and Federal Levels," offered for students taking post-masters work in educational administration but also open to other education students. Beginning next Spring, the course will also be open to doctoral students in public administration and political science under a political science number.

The course was designed to depart from the typical "state-federal school administration" course in ways that have been presaged above. In the first place, politics was viewed as permeating most human activities; it is omnipresent. Second, politics was viewed as necessary to the existence of human society. Third, it was viewed as a behavioral process, observable and assessable within behavioral science concepts incorporating both psychological and sociological dimensions. Thus, we joined with modernist political scientists in treating political behavior in a more general and interdisciplinary sense.

Our focus was upon behavior and processes, strategies and interactions, rather than upon structures and formal products such as bills or laws. Anything learned about the latter was secondary or incidental to the primary focus. The focus probably made little difference in the types of readings assigned but it made discernible and important differences in the ways in which we dealt with them. The generalizations sought were behavioristic; the desired outcomes, though difficult to assess, were behavioral. This we felt to be a major departure from predominant practice.

We sought in this course to have students adopt new perspectives by having them use political science concepts to view their behavior and that of others. The new perspectives that we sought to develop in the politics course might be organized under the general headings: (1) The systems view of policy development, (2) the nature of political behavior, and (3) the dynamics of institutional roles in the political process.

The Systems View

A political system cannot operate independent of its environment. It can, by taking certain actions to reduce stresses introduced from the environment, influence the environment; thus, it can exert some control over the types of demands imposed upon it. The outputs of the political system, as from other systems, may be explained only through analysis of both environmental and intra-system forces. The outputs (products) of the political system represent responses to demands and attempts to remove, redirect or ward off those demands and to maximize support for its authority.

Political Behavior

All persons behave politically when they are vying with others for some scarce resource controlled by the social system in which they and the others are operating. Since all people do behave politically, it is not conceptually useful to attach a priori negative value to such behavior.

Since political behavior can only take place within some collective it always involves interactions among persons or agencies within the collective. These interactions always occur among people and they respond to the same forces that govern other human interaction. This is no more or no less than saying

that people are politicians and politicians are people. In these interactions that are political, persons and organizations try to maximize self-interest as they perceive it. Self-interest is defined in interaction with others particularly in primary and secondary group relationships. Thus, informal influences are at least as important as the formal influences upon policy development. Understanding informal relationships may be more important for understanding (i.e. describing, explaining, and predicting) political behavior; consequently political science draws concepts from psychology, sociology, social-psychology, and anthropology.

Political strategies must be developed in the real world if they are to be effective. In this regard, the aphorisms that politics is "the art of the possible" or "the systematic pursuit of expediency" may be regarded as truisms. Politics accepts what people are and what they do, and builds its strategies on realistic premises about human beings. Effective strategies take advantage of man's basic humanism, his wishes, his aspirations, his actions, his values, his fears, his prejudices. Though the political system may set out to improve these, it proceeds from as accurate a description as it can get, striving not to have its own values color what it sees in others. The effective politician, as the effective teacher, must strive for such hard-headed perspectives. However, politics occurs within the context of rules of politeness and ethics that prevail in the social system, and if political behavior appears to violate those rules, it may incur some societal reprimand.

Institutional Behavior in Politics

In modern society most political interactions at the state and federal levels take place through institutional or organizational channels. Political systems tend to respond to individuals in terms of their organizational affiliations. Similarly, many of the resources for which members of the state or national governments contend are controlled by organizations. Consequently, the study of political behavior involves analysis of inter-organizational interactions.

Institutions, such as schools, instill in their members perspectives different from those in other institutions. These perspectives are internalized and valued by persons who affiliate with the institutions, especially those who have spent much time and have invested much of themselves in the organization.

These perspectives serve useful purposes for the organizations, but at times they may be too limited to permit effective participation in the broader political environment. For example, educators tend to hold a number of organizational perspectives that may be used to good advantage in the political struggle. They call themselves "professionals" and they claim to have unique knowledge and skill which they feel to be indispensable to society. They maintain an aura of being "free of politics" which gives them certain immunities in the struggle for resources. However, they hold other perspectives that are dysfunctional in working for societal resources. They tend toward idealism and naivete about how political decisions are made. Their perspectives have made them largely introvertive in their primary group affiliatins. They tend to be apathetic about policy development, and they leave important policy considerations to others. They are uncomfortable when confronted with conflict. Above all, they have taken too literally the statement that education should be free of politics. To act as though education is free of politics (and ought

to be) is to let every member of society except educatprs determine the allocation of resources to education.

Since institutions produce valuables for their parent society, they are constantly evaluated by members of society. In a dynamic society, institutional products are contested for by persons or groups who share them unequally. Whenever an institution is not meeting someone's perceived needs (that is when the distribution of its products (e.g. educatinn) is contested), the aggrieved member will attempt to have it do so (that is to have it change) using whatever strategies (A) seem to be open to him, (B) promise to be effective in bringing about the change and (C) can be incorporated in some acceptable ideology. The greater the number of subsystems sharing the need (or related needs), and the greater their combined power, the greater the pressure upon the institution to change. To the degree that the aggrieving institution is responsive to decisions made in the political system, the aggrieved parties will resort to an appropriate political system to gain their ends. For example, Negroes have not received educational benefits as other citizens have. Combining their power with those who sought to benefit the poor and those who feared that ghettoism and poverty threatened an orderly society, they got courts, legislatures, and administrative agencies to allocate them better education.

When the aggrieving institution is the political system, the parties will adopt whatever behavior promises to effect change. Strategies for bringing about such change may vary from complete subservience (i.e. giving up any demand for change) to total revolution (i.e. creating new institutions). All institutions in society are under scrutiny and are judged (evaluated) in terms of the distribution of their resources.

Many forces are pressing for change in education today, and the long-range trends indicate no abatement in these forces. Education has become important as a resource to be distributed among citizens and it is a key to the allocation of other societal resources such as income, status, and national defense. Consequently it has been the subject of determinative decisions in state and national political systems. It will become so increasingly. Both because of its societal importance and because the traditional modes of allocating educational values have been unresponsive to new forces, other subsystems are making policy affecting the distribution of educational rewards. Educators now must interact with other systems in new ways.

Two Explicit Values

The course proceeded from certain value orientations, of course, which helped to determine the choice of content and methodology since they helped to determine the objectives. Some of those values are implicit in the discussion that has proceeded, but one or two should be explicated to close this paper.

The first value is that educators should recognize that they have the duty to engage in political activity for gaining resource allocations that will be educationally productive. They also have the responsibility, as citizens and as members of other collectives, to engage in political activity designed to resolve broader societal issues.

The second value, is that educators should be involved, in a constructive way, in the determination of educational policy and the resolution of issues related to education.[5] This is no less true of teachers than administrators, but since the functions of administrators involve them in frequent interactions with the school's environment, this value is imperative for the administrator. Inasmuch as administrators are required to be decision-makers, it is necessary that they be educated to make decisions, to live with the consequences, to

evaluate those consequences, and to make new decisions. This is no less true of administrative interactions with the environment than of work within the school. Even though the environment is fraught with conflicting values and opinion (even with conflicting facts), even though few if any of society's issues have any single or any satisfactory solutions, and even though decisions in that environment are essentially political and controversial, one fact alone rings clarion-true: issues demand and will receive solution. The effective educator will know that he is to be part of the solution and will welcome, will even seek out, a place at the policy table.

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Footnotes

1. George Homans, The Human Group

2. For the classic discussion of formal and informal systems see Chester Barnard, Functions of the Executive.

3. The concept values here is used synonymously with "valuables" or "resources" broadly conceived to include anything that is controlled by the social system and distributed unequally among members. It is not to be confused with values in the ethical sense. The concept includes both tangibles and intangibles such as power, status, position, etc.

4. Most of the ideas presented in this paper were David Easton's stimulated by, A Framework for Political Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965) and A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley, 1965)

5. This idea is amplified very well by James E. McClellan, "American Education and Technological Change: A Search for Perspective," in Change Perspectives in Educational Administration, edited by Max Abbott and John Lowell (Auburn, Alabama: School of Education, Auburn University, 1965) Pp. 1-16.